

**SUMMARY OF THE
ON-SITE ASSESSMENT COMMITTEE MEETING
SEPTEMBER 22, 1999**

The On-Site Assessment Committee of the National Environmental Laboratory Accreditation Conference (NELAC) met by teleconference on Wednesday, September 22, 1999, at 12:30 p.m. Eastern Daylight Time (EDT). The meeting was led by its chair, Mr. Steven Baker of the Arizona Department of Health. A list of action items is given in Attachment A. A list of participants is given in Attachment B. *The primary purpose of the meeting was to discuss assessor training issues.*

TRAINING ISSUES

The committee discussed training materials for days one and two of the basic assessor training course that had been mailed to them for their review. They were joined by Dr. Margot Hunt and Dr. Fred Siegelman, both of the United States Environmental Protection Agency (USEPA). Dr. Hunt explained that the original contract for development of the course was set to expire on September 30, 1999. In order to have sufficient time to make changes to the course materials in response to committee comments, she has terminated that contract and prepared a new work assignment. Ms. Barbara Finazzo, the committee's NELAC Board of Directors (BoD) liaison, reminded participants that Dr. Hunt needs agreement from them that course content is acceptable so that she can prepare a Request for Proposal (RFP) for modification of course format. Although there was general agreement that the course materials reflect adequate detail and consistency, a participant suggested that trainers be given some leeway to change the order of the course materials so long as they do not change content. A second participant expressed the preference that the committee make such changes now rather than later, since errors might be introduced in the modification process from trainer to trainer. It was suggested that the course materials include a qualifier that times set forth for each topic are recommended or estimated times. It was also suggested that it is better to have more flexibility at the start of the NELAC implementation process when it is likely that there will be more confusion.

The committee addressed comments on the training materials submitted by Ms. Marlene Moore prior to the teleconference. She noted that no practical examples or learning exercises are included throughout the course materials. She noted that consistent interpretation of program requirements is necessary in response to subtle differences between Chapters 1 and 2 of the NELAC Standards. Chapter 1 refers to program method analyte requirements while Chapter 2 refers to program matrix analyte. For this reason, proficiency testing (PT) units should be expanded to include an example scope of accreditation. Units concerning reports should include example reports in order to provide a consistent reporting mechanism. In response to these comments, it was decided that Ms. Moore will prepare something in writing, perhaps with examples, for presentation to the contractor. The remainder of her comments addressed consistency of language between the training materials and the NELAC Standards and consistency between the various standards, themselves. It was suggested that all training materials reference the source standard so that training materials can be updated more easily as standards are changed. It was also suggested that the committee modify the On-site Assessment Standard to make it more consistent with the Quality Systems Standard. The committee took this suggestion

under advisement. After considerable discussion of the purpose of the on-site assessment as it would be spelled out in the training materials, the committee tentatively settled on the following language: "The purpose of the on-site assessment is to assure that the systems are in place and working for the generation of data of known and documented quality." There was also considerable discussion of the issue of standards of ethical conduct. It was noted that training materials should clearly distinguish between a code of ethics for laboratories and a code of ethics for assessors. Although it was suggested that the basic assessor training course should present recommended rules for ethical conduct, it was also suggested that any reference to ethics that is not included in the standards should be removed from the training course. In response, Mr. Baker stated that he would address the ethics issue with the BoD by discussing with them a change of language in the standard concerning ethics to which the laboratory can be held. Discussion turned to the issue of the final exam for the basic assessor training course. It was suggested that each committee member provide Dr. Hunt with 20 questions for the final exam. Mr. Baker stated that he would e-mail each committee member a reminder to do this.

In response to committee questions, Dr. Hunt noted that she does not know when to expect the remainder of the finalized training course materials from the training contractor. Ms. Lisa Greene, Research Triangle Institute, will provide Dr. Hunt with a list of mailing addresses so that she can mail the finalized hardcopy materials to committee members when they are ready.

MISCELLANEOUS BUSINESS

It was noted that the NELAC Transition Committee is looking for an immediate response to many issues so that they can more readily respond to laboratory questions about the accreditation process. It was suggested that it is important, therefore, to open better lines of communication. In response, Ms. Moore volunteered to contact Ms. Carol Batterton, chair of the Transition Committee, to invite her to participate in the next two On-site Assessment Committee meetings.

CONCLUSION

The next two On-site Assessment Committee meetings are scheduled for October 6 and October 20, 1999, from 12:30 p.m. to 2:30 p.m. EDT. Mr. Baker noted that the agenda for the October 6 meeting is to finish discussion of the basic assessor training course in the first hour and to address revised assessor checklists in the second hour. The allotted time coming to an end, the committee meeting was adjourned at 2:30 p.m. EDT.

**ACTION ITEMS
ON-SITE ASSESSMENT COMMITTEE MEETING
SEPTEMBER 22, 1999**

Item No.	Action	Date to be Completed
1.	Ms. Moore will prepare written direction for practical examples and learning exercises, to include example documents, for presentation to the training contractor.	
2.	Mr. Baker will address with the NELAC BoD a change of language in the standard concerning the code of ethics to which the laboratory can be held.	
3.	Mr. Baker will e-mail each committee member a reminder to prepare and e-mail to Dr. Hunt 20 questions for the basic assessor training course final exam.	Complete
4.	Ms. Moore will contact Ms. Batterton, chair of the Transition Committee, to invite her to participate in the next two On-site Assessment Committee teleconferences.	10/6/99
5.	Ms. Lisa Greene will provide Dr. Hunt with a list of mailing addresses so that she can mail finalized hardcopy course materials to committee members when they are ready.	Complete

PARTICIPANTS
ON-SITE ASSESSMENT COMMITTEE MEETING
SEPTEMBER 22, 1999

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